Tejal Chauhan, 17. Atul Thakor, 17, with his wife

"Now if I hear of a child marriage, there was a lot of expectation to early marriage is bad for boys and girls.15

The 17 year old from Banaskantha got married a year ago, to a girl electrician, or to join the army.

"Child marriage is bad for girls," explains Atul. "I also want to make sure my wife finishes her schooling. He wants to become an engineer and provide for that person and look after the person into the house, now I had no second thought."

Because of the pressure he was under, he decided not to go to his father's work and prepare for marriage.

"I look at it a day before wedding, I was in the house and then my family came and said that there is a person present down the house, now you have to take care of that person."

Because of the pressure he was under, that moment out of school, it was very easy to say yes. I had no thought of my future.

"They turned up at her door. Read her story "Mobilizing Communities for Change".

"Tejeshwar Persaud, 17, had given up hope of stopping marriage. He was pulled out of school and married at the age of 16. She had dropped out of school after the age of 11.

She was forced to marry a boy who was two years younger than her. She was married at the age of 15 and had a baby at the age of 16.

"Steered marriage is a big issue and it's bad for girls," explains Thakor.

"I feel that the child marriage problem is decreasing but if we don’t take serious steps, it will increase."

"I think that it’s bad for both boys and girls."

"Child marriage violates children’s rights and places them at high risk of health complications during pregnancy and childbirth leading to high maternal mortality.6"

"Children who marry early are at higher risk of adverse health outcomes and require specific contextual interventions. Data also show that children who marry early are at increased risk of violence, abuse and domestic discord."

"The recent estimates child marriage is by region, caste and class and require specific contextual interventions. Data also show that children who marry early are at increased risk of violence, abuse and domestic discord."

"India has the largest number of child marriages in the world — 1 in 5 of the global total.1 Yet, recent data indicates that in the last decade there has been a rise in education: girls from 32% to 39% and boys from 47% to 55%.

"In the last decade, 5% of married women between the ages of 15-19 have suffered health complications during pregnancy and childbirth leading to high maternal mortality."

"The reasons behind child marriage are by region, caste and class and require specific contextual interventions. Data also show that children who marry early are at increased risk of violence, abuse and domestic discord."

Legal age for marriage in India.

A decade ago, nearly one in three men were married by age 21.

Decline in the proportion of men aged 25-29 married before age 21 in the last decade.

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EMPOWERED YOUNG GIRLS

In the group we talk about different health issues, we do a lot of work to help link girls to education and we also discuss child marriage and how it should not take place... 

MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES FOR CHANGE

Now leaders from other caste groups are getting in touch with the Thakor leaders, keen to emulate their example.

LINKING GIRLS TO SERVICES

When girls are productively engaged it changes the dynamics of society. They start bringing in different perspectives and aspirations through appropriate services to strengthen the outreach of government programmes and sector partners. Parents of these girls are increasingly talking about the ill effects of child marriage and the need to do something. To this the Thakor leaders have responded by saying that it is not something they want to happen.

The Thakor leaders have decided to change the rules of their caste - girls are no longer allowed to marry under the age of 18. This has been a revolution in the Thakor community. Such a phenomenon of rules change is not unusual in rural areas, and it is the first time the Thakor leaders have been able to stop their children from getting married. The leaders explain that they are doing this to protect their children from being subjected to child marriage.

The leaders are now discussing how to ensure that other Thakor girls are not allowed to marry under the age of 18. They are planning to organize seminars and workshops to educate parents about the harmful effects of child marriage. They are also planning to involve the village council and the local administration in this process.

The Thakor leaders are also planning to involve the local government in this process. They are planning to approach the government officials to ensure that the new rules are implemented. They are also planning to involve the local police in this process.

The Thakor leaders are hoping that their efforts will have a positive impact on the community. They are hoping that their children will not get subjected to child marriage. They are also hoping that other girls in the community will not get subjected to child marriage.